December 19, 2011

Journal #3: The Good Earth by Pearl S. Buck

**Summary**: I the beginning of this section Wang and his family set off on their journey south to find food. The hear stories of this “fire wagon” that carries men south, and go figure the family gets shuffled onto one of these wagons. As they are riding the wagon the reader ventures into Wang’s mind and truly see’s the ugly picture of starvation and extreme fatigue. Once arriving in the south the family follows the other passengers to a feeding place where they can buy rice for only a penny. This is the first meal the family has had in many days. Soon after they eat, Wang realizes that they need a way to make money. O-lan remembers her life as a child and teaches the family how to beg for money. Wang is completely appalled by this notion and instead goes out and rents a “human carrier” that he can transport town’s folk for a small fee. Wang soon realizes that “light skinned” people pay better then the natives and shares this knowledge with O-lan who conforms this assumption to her experiences. While O-lan is begging for money the two sons go out and chose to steal meat from the towns butcher. When Wang finds out about this he beats his children because he does not want to be associated with such behavior. In the next section, the reader once again goes into the mind of Wang. He is very upset for he misses his field. He does not like being a taxi service; he would prefer making an honest profit by working with the land. Because the family is at a standstill financially Wang contemplates selling his only daughter into slavery, so she can have food and clothing while growing up. However, the ugly truth of slave life is the women are beat every day just to be sold to a man when they reach the mature age, which the reader hears from O-lan’s memories. And on top of this burden of having too many mouths to feed, Wang discovers that O-lan is expecting once again. Soon following these revelations, the reader finds out about a war going on between the south and an unknown land. Wang witnesses many men being seized against their will to fight in the war, therefore he hides in his hut. This goes on for many days, until strange things start happening in the town. The townsfolk start boarding up their shops and others even abandon the city. One night Wang is awoken by loud pounding on the city’s gates, soon to find out it is the enemy coming to steal whatever they can get their hands on. All the homeless families' leave their huts and join the invaders on their quest. As a whole they break down the doors of a palace located right behind Wang’s hut. Inside there is gold and riches galore! Wang however does not have the conscious to steal from these people, however he finds a fat, oily man (sign of wealth) weeping in the corner. When approached he begs Wang not to kill him, so Wang uses this violent assumption to his advantage. He tells the man he will spare his only if he gives him all the gold he has on his person, and naturally the man complies. This chapter concluded with Wang leaving the palace with his new riches and rejoicing for he can soon return to his home land.

**Analysis**: This part of the book was very refreshing. Yes, everything is not necessarily going Wang’s way, but things are looking up. By arriving in the south, the family has now escaped death by starvation and now has a better outlook on their future. The fact that Wang contemplated selling his daughter really broke my heart because I was almost positive he would do it. When hearing O-lan’s story of her experiences in the slave house, it depicted an evil place that was covered by pretty faces and fancy clothing. She said that he understood if Wang decided to sell their daughter but would never wish that life on her worst enemy. This showed the faith she has in her husband to do the morally right thing and how she respects him. The one thing that outraged me in this reading was the surprise that O-lan is now expecting again. A baby is a miracle, but when you already have three children and are fighting poverty one must get their priorities straight. Obviously, they do not want a child in this time therefore they should not be taking the risks that would lead to conception.

**Application**: This part of the story applies to human ideals. With human ideals, a person strives to be perfect, though that is unattainable. Wang is striving to provide for his whole family while trying to save money to travel back to their farm in the future. Therefore during this time away from their home Wang built a hut to house his family and provide shelter from outside forces. All the homeless or poor families built their huts on a particular wall located outside the palace. These huts are arguably an artifact that depicts the hardships that certain Chinese families endure. Another objective in this section is human behavior. When learning to beg properly from their mother, O-lan, the boys did not take her seriously. Therefore, they resorted to juvenile behavior and did not help the family out. When realizing they are hurting the family, the boys begin stealing food from the local butcher to make up for their incompetence to beg. You can still see this behavior in the world today. If a child does not feel they are living up to their parents’ expectations they may act out to get attention, or even strive to gain their parents approval.